

Written Testimony for Friday, February 23, 2024, 3pm

Scott Farr, River Valley Technical Center Superintendent/Director, President of Vermont Association of Career and Technical Education Director (VACTED)

Melissa Connor, Stafford Technical Center Director, Past President VACTED

Jody Emerson, Central Vermont Career Center Superintendent/Director, Vice President VACTED

Governance:

VACTED supports the hold on Governance which would allow VACTED to collaborate with APA, the Agency of Education, and the Legislature to determine the best model of governance to provide equity and access Vermont CTE. - Scott Farr

(1) basing the tuition charged to a school district on the district's prior year full-time equivalent student enrollment in a CTE center:

Funding:

During FY26 & FY27, while AOE contracts with APA to model out a funding system that puts forth a plan for the future, funding will be delivered directly from the ed fund in a block grant formula based on previous budget with requests for what additional costs are anticipated with a hold harmless clause. VACTED supports the direct payment from the ed fund to our centers, much better than some directly funded and some billed to sending schools through tuition. How will this direct funding of CTE impact sending schools? We advocate that any changes not harm any centers. What is the projected impact on CTEs? Page 2, line 11 - is "tuition charged to a school district" being removed? Why shift to one year ADM if we are going to shift the funding formula again in three years? Potential concerns regarding wide swings in enrollment from year to year and new programming, not to mention additional costs that are embedded in the Middle School and 9th & 10th grade requirements of the bill.

VACTED supports a funding system which will not serve as a disincentive to access for students, particularly at a time when so many variable financial pressures are impacting the education system as a whole. We have some reservations about a year to year funding mechanism given the possibility of fluctuations in funding. We also have reservations about changing the funding system now, only to change it further once the APA group finishes their modeling. - Scott Farr

VACTED Prioritized Ask:

Develop Non-Competitive Funding ASAP - APA Recommendation #3:

Implement funding mechanisms fostering collaboration, mitigating tension between CTE programs and traditional high schools by avoiding competitive funding structures. A block funding via the ed fund until a longer-term solution is found, CTE funding should not be accounted for in the sending school budgets.

(2) requiring school districts to provide students in grades six through eight with career enrichment and exposure, including at least one annual visit to the school district's regional career and technical education center;

(3) requiring school districts to provide students enrolled in grades nine and ten a genuine opportunity to participate fully in pre-tech and exploratory career and technical courses;

Middle School Access: Essex/Burlington have over 20 middle schools in their service region, Stafford has over 30 middle schools. Making it a requirement for all students grades 6-8 to visit annually is going to have a significant impact on the learning of CTE students to have so many disrupted days, not to mention the strain on human resources at centers and sending schools to coordinate all of these visits. Concerns about the disruption this could bring and if there are flexible ways through which centers might meet these goals.

9th and 10th grade access: Define "genuine opportunity". How do we provide "genuine access" to 9th and 10th graders if we don't have capacity (i.e. space, staffing, budget, etc.) for it yet. Is that an entry point into a discussion of the development of Technical High Schools? What is the time frame to create this? Is there financial support to develop as FY25 budgets are already set. If any of these are created at sending schools or in satellite locations - oversight of programming is an additional concern along with OSHA limits, transportation, etc.

If we are increasing access to CTE, we must also partner to increase preparedness for CTE.

VACTED supports seamless pathways to Career and Technical Education but one size or specific requirement fits all approaches may not be executable. For example, Stafford Technical Center serves over 30 middle schools; coordinating visits with each of these would be a strain on the CTE center and sending school. Maybe this particular component can be better captured in the Career Development Plan concept. Additionally, the importance and scope of this work should be supported with a required funded position at each CTE center.- **Melissa Connor**

VACTED Prioritized Ask:

Coordination with Middle Schools and Post-Secondary - APA Recommendations #7 and #8: *To facilitate seamless coordination among various educational entities. It is imperative for the CTE Center to deploy capable personnel who can strategically craft integrated pathways extending from the CTE to middle schools in sending districts. This initiative encompasses early high school career awareness and exploration, marking a significant recommendation for systemic change.*

VACTED supports seamless pathways to Career and Technical Education with the opportunity for career awareness and career exploration but a one size or requirement fits all approach may not be executable. Maybe this particular component can be better captured in the Career

Development Plan concept. A barrier to access is the variable graduation requirements which exist in high schools currently. All students need to be participating in an academically rigorous curriculum to develop the reading, writing, math, and problem solving skills needed to successfully participate in CTE.- **Jody Emerson**

Adult students not being factored into FTE counts creates a disincentive for workforce development. The amount of tuition we can collect is insignificant compared to what could happen if they were factored into FTE counts. Sending districts should not be paying for adults with diplomas, there must be another mechanism by which to include adults with diplomas into the FTE count, such as the Department of Labor.

(4) requiring the Agency of Education to create and supervisory unions to adopt a model comprehensive career development policy;

Comprehensive Career Development Policy - does a draft of this policy exist? What is the timeline as some of this will require additional funding, staffing, etc. that was not budgeted for in our FY25 budgets (going to vote in 2 weeks) and we must adopt and ensure implementation of this policy in the beginning of the FY25 school year.

VACTED Prioritized Ask:

Recognition of CTE-Embedded Academics Towards Graduation - APA Recommendation #4: *Acknowledge and fully accept embedded academics in technical programs designated by the Vermont Agency of Education, including recognizing CTE-embedded academic credits/proficiencies toward graduation. Remove barriers to access for high school students. We believe this can be accomplished via changes in the State Board Rule. - **Melissa Connor***

(5) changing oversight of CTE from the State Board of Education to the Secretary of Education;

If the AOE becomes the rule maker for CTE in place of the State Board, what would that look like? Perhaps that should be put on hold until we know what will happen with Governance.

Thoughts:

- *AOE staffing dependant, they could be more responsive with the additional staffing recommended by APA*
- *AOE leadership and State Governor changes could mean continuous change for CTE and may not have the best interests of students at heart.*
- *Is there potential for a collaborative process?*

*VACTED can see that based on all of the recommendations embedded in the APA Report a need exists for changes in rules and regulation. VACTED is without recommendations pertaining to the entity executing the rule making but would welcome engagement in a collaborative process including representatives from the field. - **Scott Farr***

(6) requiring the Vermont State Colleges Corporation to maintain program and course articulation agreements with all secondary CTE centers in certain programs;

VTSU maintaining program and course articulation agreements - how is this determined? Especially in specific programs - what does this look like? Currently CVCC is paying a portion of the tuition for our students in EMS 2 to participate in the Paramedicine program while VTSU has provided free in-state tuition to its students - is there a method of achieving equity in this?

VACTED supports genuinely seamless pathways for students to the VTSU and CCV. However, articulation agreements don't full meet the threshold with our Federal Perkins Requirements.

Here are the requirements for next year:

FY 25 CTE Program Quality Requirements

Must offer Perkins V-qualifying IRC(s)	Must offer At least 6 Credits or 3 Credits + IRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automotive, Auto Body, Diesel • Building Trades, Carpentry • Cosmetology • Dental Assisting • Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing • Heavy Equipment • Industrial Maintenance • Welding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Cybersecurity • Digital Arts, Performing Arts • Engineering • Human Services, Teacher Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Manufacturing* • Culinary Arts • Health Sciences • Diversified Agriculture • Forestry/Natural Resources* • IT/ Computer Systems/ Computer Networking • Computer Animation • Law Enforcement/Public Safety, Emergency Services • Outdoor Recreation

* Some exceptions possible for IRCs only; requires AOE approval



VACTED Prioritized Ask:

Coordination with Middle Schools and Post-Secondary - APA Recommendations #7 and #8:

To facilitate seamless coordination among various educational entities. It is imperative for the CTE Center to deploy capable personnel who can strategically craft integrated pathways extending from the CTE to middle schools in sending districts. This initiative encompasses early high school career awareness and exploration, marking a significant recommendation for systemic change. - **Melissa Connor**

(7) articulating the intent to include CTEs in updates to State aid for school construction; and Facilities Construction:

VACTED supports including CTE in the State's construction aid.

VACTED Prioritized Ask:

Infrastructure Plan for Facilities and Equipment Growth - APA Recommendation #2:

Develop a comprehensive plan for facilities and equipment that supports reduction of student waitlists, and future growth, ensuring a robust infrastructure for Career and Technical Education.- Jody Emerson

(8) requiring the Agency of Education to develop a statewide school calendar.

VACTED supports a unified statewide coordinated calendar with alignment start and end date, holidays, school vacations and four common professional development days.

VACTED Prioritized Ask:

Common Statewide Calendar - APA Recommendation #4:

Establish a unified professional development calendar for Career and Technical Education (CTE) staff aligned with the common school year calendar statewide and regional scheduling that allows equitable access to Vermont's students - Melissa Connor

Prioritizing APA Recommendations for Vermont Career Technical Education

Dear Vermont Career Technical Education Stakeholders,

VACTED firmly believes that the findings of the APA study accurately pinpoint areas for improvement within Vermont CTE. However, we are reaching out to underscore the importance of prioritizing recommendations derived from the recent Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) study on the Funding and Governance of Career Technical Education in Vermont for more immediate impact.

Immediate Action Items to Positively Impact Vermont CTE

Develop Non-Competitive Funding ASAP - APA Recommendation #3:

Implement funding mechanisms fostering collaboration, mitigating tension between CTE programs and traditional high schools by avoiding competitive funding structures. A block funding via the ed fund until a longer-term solution is found, CTE funding should not be accounted for in the sending school budgets.

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Agency of Education Staffing - APA Recommendation #6:

Adequate staffing at the Agency of Education is crucial to support Vermont's CTE and the education system as a whole. This is needed to facilitate the delivery of an equitable system, and we hope for a prompt resolution.

More Time Needed for Planning and Coordination

Coordination with Middle Schools and Post-Secondary - APA Recommendations #7 and #8: To facilitate seamless coordination among various educational entities. It is imperative for the CTE Center to deploy capable personnel who can strategically craft integrated pathways extending from the CTE to middle schools in sending districts. This initiative encompasses early high school career awareness and exploration, marking a significant recommendation for systemic change.

Coordinated Governance Structure - APA Recommendation #10:

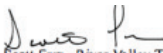
Thoughtfully investigate and evaluate governance structures for Vermont CTE with input from stakeholders for the best possible CTE delivery model. More time is needed as this represents a larger system change impacting the whole education system.

CTE Teacher Preparation Programming and Compensation - APA Recommendation #5: While recent changes in the current CTE teacher preparation program have been viewed favorably, maximizing flexibility and creativity in all teacher preparation programs to address the looming teacher shortage should be considered, as the impacts will be on the system as a whole. CTE teacher compensation remains challenging because it is determined via locally bargained agreements.

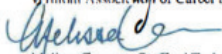
Funding for Specific Programming and Distribution - APA Recommendations #1 and #9: Effective coordination among various educational entities is crucial, demanding additional time allowing for the intricacies of implementing broader systemic changes. Programming within schools in the service region should avoid duplication and form an integral part of a well-considered, progressive career pathway—spanning from Career Awareness and Career Exploration to Career Preparation.

Our state's CTE system graduates are becoming increasingly essential in a time of abundant career opportunities across all the pathways we serve. The recommendations presented in this letter focus on areas where we believe immediate impact is achievable. We are optimistic that the four proposed immediate action items will be addressed, as they have been under discussion and consideration for several years. The remaining suggestions will necessitate additional time to be developed into actionable plans. VACTED eagerly anticipates collaboration with all stakeholders in shaping the future of CTE in the State of Vermont.

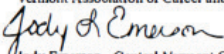
Respectfully,



Scott Farr - River Valley Technical Center
President
Vermont Association of Career and Technical Education Directors



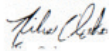
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